<u>**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**</u>

1. **(Currently Amended)** <u>An image decoding method for generating a predictive pixel value of a current picture to be decoded, using</u> A ~~moving picture prediction method for predicting pixel values in a picture that forms a moving picture based on~~ pixel values ~~in~~ <u>of</u> two reference pictures, <u>and decoding the current picture using the predictive pixel value,</u> the method comprising:

a first parameter calculation step of calculating a first parameter corresponding to a <u>temporal</u> distance between [[a]] <u>the</u> current picture and a first reference picture;

a second parameter calculation step of calculating a second parameter corresponding to a <u>temporal</u> distance between the first reference picture and a second reference picture;

a ~~first~~ judgment step of judging whether <u>or not a value of</u> a third parameter calculated based on the first and the second parameters is included in a predetermined range ~~or not~~;

<u>a predictive pixel value generation step of</u>

<u>(i) generating a predictive pixel value of</u> ~~a first prediction step of calculating pixel values in~~ the current picture by scaling <u>a pixel value of the first reference picture and a pixel value of the second reference picture using a weighting coefficient calculated by the first parameter and the second parameter, in a case where it is judged, in said</u> ~~based on the first and the second parameters and pixel values in the first and the second reference pictures when a result of the judgment in the first~~ judgment step, ~~shows~~ that the <u>value of the</u> third parameter is included in the predetermined range, [[;]] and

<u>(ii) generating a predictive pixel value of</u> ~~a second prediction step of calculating pixel values in~~ the current picture by scaling <u>a pixel value of the first reference picture and a</u>

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pixel value of the second reference picture using a weighting coefficient of a predetermined value, in a case where it is judged, in said ~~based on predetermined values and pixel values in the first and the second reference pictures when a result of the judgment in the first~~ judgment step, ~~shows~~ that the value of the third parameter is not included in the predetermined range; and

a decoding step of decoding the current picture using the predictive pixel value calculated in said predictive pixel value generation step.

2-18. (Canceled)

19. (New) An image decoding apparatus which generates a predictive pixel value of a current picture to be decoded, using pixel values of two reference pictures, and decodes the current picture using the predictive pixel value, said apparatus comprising:

a first parameter calculation unit operable to calculate a first parameter corresponding to a temporal distance between the current picture and a first reference picture;

a second parameter calculation unit operable to calculate a second parameter corresponding to a temporal distance between the first reference picture and a second reference picture;

a judgment unit operable to judge whether or not a value of a third parameter calculated based on the first and second parameters is included in a predetermined range;

a predictive pixel value generation unit operable to

(i) generate a predictive pixel value of the current picture by scaling a pixel value of the first reference picture and a pixel value of the second reference picture using a weighting

coefficient calculated by the first parameter and the second parameter, in a case where said judgment unit judges that the value of the third parameter is included in the predetermined range, and

    (ii) generate a predictive pixel value of the current picture by scaling a pixel value of the first reference picture and a pixel value of the second reference picture using a weighting coefficient of a predetermined value, in a case where said judgment unit judges that the value of the third parameter is not included in the predetermined range; and

  a decoding unit operable to decode the current picture using the predictive pixel value calculated by said predictive pixel value generation unit.

  20. (New) A data recording medium on which a program for decoding an image signal is stored,

  wherein the program causes a computer to execute the decoding using the image decoding method according to Claim 1.

  21. (New) An image coding method for generating a predictive pixel value of a current picture to be coded, using pixel values of two reference pictures, and coding the current picture using the predictive pixel value, said method comprising:

  a first parameter calculation step of calculating a first parameter corresponding to a temporal distance between the current picture and a first reference picture;

  a second parameter calculation step of calculating a second parameter corresponding to a temporal distance between the first reference picture and a second reference picture;

a judgment step of judging whether or not a value of a third parameter calculated based on the first and second parameters is included in a predetermined range;

a predictive pixel value generation step of

(i) generating a predictive pixel value of the current picture by scaling a pixel value of the first reference picture and a pixel value of the second reference picture using a weighting coefficient calculated by the first parameter and the second parameter, in a case where it is judged, in said judgment step, that the value of the third parameter is included in the predetermined range, and

(ii) generating a predictive pixel value of the current picture by scaling a pixel value of the first reference picture and a pixel value of the second reference picture using a weighting coefficient of a predetermined value, in a case where it is judged, in said judgment step, that the value of the third parameter is not included in the predetermined range; and

a coding step of coding the current picture using the predictive pixel value calculated in said predictive pixel value generation step.

22. **(New)** An image coding apparatus which generates a predictive pixel value of a current picture to be coded, using pixel values of two reference pictures, and codes the current picture using the predictive pixel value, said apparatus comprising:

a first parameter calculation unit operable to calculate a first parameter corresponding to a temporal distance between the current picture and a first reference picture;

a second parameter calculation unit operable to calculate a second parameter corresponding to a temporal distance between the first reference picture and a second reference picture;

a judgment unit operable to judge whether or not a value of a third parameter calculated based on the first and second parameters is included in a predetermined range;

a predictive pixel value generation unit operable to

(i) generate a predictive pixel value of the current picture by scaling a pixel value of the first reference picture and a pixel value of the second reference picture using a weighting coefficient calculated by the first parameter and the second parameter, in a case where said judgment unit judges that the value of the third parameter is included in the predetermined range, and

(ii) generate a predictive pixel value of the current picture by scaling a pixel value of the first reference picture and a pixel value of the second reference picture using a weighting coefficient of a predetermined value, in a case where said judgment unit judges that the value of the third parameter is not included in the predetermined range; and

a coding unit operable to code the current picture using the predictive pixel value calculated by said predictive pixel value generation unit.

23. (New) A data recording medium on which a program for coding an image signal is stored,

wherein the program causes a computer to execute the coding using the image coding method according to Claim 21.